

**Remarks**

This Application has been carefully reviewed in light of the final Office Action mailed April 8, 2004. Applicants believe all pending claims are allowable over the rejections made by the Examiner, and Applicants have not amended any of the claims. Applicants respectfully request reconsideration and allowance of all pending claims.

**I. Applicants' Claims are Allowable over the Proposed *Gardner-Nattkemper* Combination**

The Examiner rejects Claims 1-5, 7-21, 24-33, 36-37, and 40-46 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over U.S. Patent 6,023,474 to Gardner, et al. ("Gardner") in view of U.S. Patent 5,999,518 to Nattkemper, et al. ("Nattkemper"). Applicants respectfully disagree.

For example, independent Claim 1 recites:

A system for identifying a subscriber, comprising:

an access server coupled to a plurality of subscribers using a first communication network and further coupled to a second communication network, the access server operable to receive a communication from a particular subscriber using a particular one of a plurality of virtual circuits associated with the first communication network;

a memory coupled to the access server and operable to store path information for the plurality of subscribers, the path information for the particular subscriber identifying a virtual circuit that is pre-assigned to the particular subscriber for communicating with the access server; and

a processor coupled to the memory and operable to:

compare the path information for the particular subscriber to the particular virtual circuit used to receive the communication from the particular subscriber; and

identify the particular subscriber for connection to the second communication network based on the comparison.

In contrast, *Gardner* merely discloses a system for interfacing a GR-303 system with a broadband system, which can be an ATM system. (Abstract) The invention can process the GR-303 signaling to select ATM connections and then inter-work the GR-303 connections with the selected ATM connections. (Abstract) *Gardner*, whether considered alone or in combination with *Nattkemper* or knowledge generally available to those having ordinary skill in the art at the time of invention, fails to teach, suggest, or disclose various limitations recited in Claim 1. Applicants address example distinctions below.

**A. The Proposed *Gardner-Nattkemper* Combination Fails to Teach, Suggest, or Disclose an “Access Server” as Recited in Claim 1**

*Gardner* fails to teach, suggest, or disclose “an access server coupled to a plurality of subscribers using a first communication network and further coupled to a second communication network, the access server operable to receive a communication from a particular subscriber using a particular one of a plurality of virtual circuits associated with the first communication network,” as recited in Claim 1. The Examiner apparently equates the broadband system interface 300 disclosed in *Gardner* with the access server recited in Claim 1. (See Office Action, Page 2) As disclosing “the access server operable to receive a communication from a particular subscriber using a particular one of a plurality of virtual circuits associated with the first communication network,” the Examiner cites mux 350 disclosed in *Gardner*. Applicants respectfully submit that *Gardner* does not support this interpretation. As disclosed in *Gardner*, mux 350 is contained within broadband system interface 300. (See Figure 3) According to *Gardner*, “[m]ux 350 is operational to receive GR-303 formatted communications over connections 330 and 332 and links 331 and 333. The bearer channels from connections 330 and 332 and the signaling channels from links 331 and 333 are in the well known DS0 format.” (Column 4, Line 64 through Column 5, Line 1) *Gardner* discloses that mux 350 of broadband system interface 300 receives calls from callers (e.g., users of telephones 210-215) in DS0 format via remote digital terminals 220 and 222. (See Figure 3)

According to *Gardner*, “mux 350 is also operational to convert DS0s into ATM cells with selected Virtual Path Identifiers/Virtual Channel Identifiers (VPI/VCIs).” (Column 5, Lines 14-16; emphasis added) Thus, *Gardner* merely discloses that mux 350, which is a part of broadband system interface 300 (which the Examiner equates with the access server recited in Claim 1), receives DS0 signals and converts those DS0 signals into ATM cells. However, *Gardner* fails to teach, suggest, or disclose that its broadband system interface 300 is “operable to receive a communication from a particular subscriber using a particular one of a plurality of virtual circuits associated with the first communication network,” as recited in Claim 1. *Nattkemper* fails to account for these deficiencies of *Gardner*.

**B. The Proposed *Gardner-Natikemper* Combination Fails to Teach, Suggest, or Disclose a Memory Operable to Store “Path Information” as Recited in Claim 1**

*Gardner* fails to teach, suggest, or disclose “a memory coupled to the access server and operable to store path information for the plurality of subscribers, the path information for the particular subscriber identifying a virtual circuit that is pre-assigned to the particular subscriber for communicating with the access server,” as recited in Claim 1. The Examiner apparently equates mux 350 disclosed in *Gardner* to the memory recited in Claim 1. (Office Action, Page 2) Applicants respectfully submit that *Gardner* does not support this interpretation.

First, it is not even clear that mux 350 could be equated with a memory.<sup>1</sup> *Gardner* states that “[m]ux 350 provides the bearer interface and the signaling interface. Mux 350 is operational to receive GR-303 formatted communications over connections 330 and 332 and links 331 and 333.” (Column 4, Lines 63-66) *Gardner* further discloses that “[m]ux 350 is able to connect each DS0 to any other DS0.” (Column 5, Lines 1-2) *Gardner* also discloses that “[m]ux 350 connects the DS0 from link 333 to a DS0 of link 354 to provide a GR-303 signaling channel from remote digital terminal 322 to signaling converter 362.” (Column 5, Lines 5-8) These excerpts from *Gardner* make clear that mux 350 is a processing device capable of performing certain functions. *Gardner* does not appear to disclose that mux 350 is or includes a memory. Thus, mux 350 cannot be properly equated with the memory recited in Claim 1.

Second, as disclosing “a memory . . . operable to store path information for the plurality of subscribers, the path information for the particular subscriber identifying a virtual circuit that is pre-assigned to the particular subscriber for communicating with the access server,” as recited in Claim 1, the Examiner refers to mux 350 disclosed in *Gardner* and Column 5, Lines 14-26. (See Office Action, Pages 2 and 3) The portions of *Gardner* cited by the Examiner as disclosing that mux 350 stores “path information for the plurality of subscribers” and that “the path information for the particular subscriber identif[ies] a virtual

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<sup>1</sup> For example, a multiplexer is a “communications device the multiplexes (combines) several signals for transmission over a single medium.” See, Webopedia, *Definition of Multiplexor*, available at <http://www.webopedia.com/TERM/m/multiplexor.html> (last visited July 7, 2004).

pre-assigned to the particular subscriber for communicating with the access server" fail to disclose these limitations.

As discussed above, *Gardner* discloses that mux 350 is operational to *convert* DS0s into ATM cells with selected VPIs/VCIs. (Column 5, Lines 14-16; emphasis added) *Gardner* discloses that these ATM cells are transmitted over connection 340 to an ATM cross-connect device that routes the cells according to their VPI/VCI. (Column 5, Lines 17-20) According to *Gardner*, "[s]ince DS0s are bi-directional, a companion VPI/VCI will typically be pre-assigned to the selected VPI/VCI to provide a call connection back to the caller. The mux would convert ATM cells from this companion VPI/VCI into the return path of the DS0. Mux 350 makes the DS0/ATM conversions in response to control instructions from signaling processor 360 that are received over link 352." (Column 5, Lines 20-26) While the term "pre-assigned" is used in close proximity to the term VPI/VCI in *Gardner*, a closer examination of *Gardner* reveals that *Gardner* fails to teach, suggest, or disclose "a memory . . . operable to store path information for the plurality of subscribers, the path information for the particular subscriber identifying a virtual circuit that is pre-assigned to the particular subscriber for communicating with the access server," as recited in Claim 1. In particular, the pre-assignment disclosed in *Gardner* has nothing to do with "a virtual circuit that is pre-assigned to the particular subscriber for communicating with the access server," as recited in Claim 1.

As can be seen from the above-cited portions of *Gardner*, mux 350 receives communications in the form of a DS0. Mux 350 then *converts* the DS0 into ATM cells with a selected VPI/VCI for communication to an ATM cross-connect device. A companion VPI/VCI is pre-assigned to the selected VPI/VCI, so that when ATM cells are received from this companion VPI/VCI, mux 350 can convert those ATM cells into the return path of the DS0, presumably so mux 350 can send those converted ATM cells on that return path. There simply is no pre-assignment of a virtual circuit to a particular subscriber for communicating with the access server in *Gardner*. In fact, *Gardner* discloses that "[a]dvantageously, the VPI/VCI is selected on a call-by-call basis by the signaling processor," eliminating any suggestion that they are pre-assigned to particular subscribers as recited in Claim 1. (See Column 6, Lines 63-65) Furthermore, while the DS0s may be specific to a particular

telephone for a particular call, there is no disclosure, teaching or suggestion in *Gardner* that the DS0 format of the signals received from the remote digital terminals (via connections 330 and 332 and links 331 and 333) are pre-assigned to particular callers or telephones. In fact, the DS0s can apparently be used by multiple telephones. (See Figure 3 and Column 4, Line 63 through Column 5, Line 13) This further illustrates that *Gardner* fails to disclose, teach, or suggest “a memory . . . operable to store path information for the plurality of subscribers, the path information for the particular subscriber identifying a virtual circuit that is pre-assigned to the particular subscriber for communicating with the access server,” as recited in Claim 1. *Nattkemper* fails to account for these deficiencies of *Gardner*.

**C. The Proposed *Gardner-Nattkemper* Combination Fails to Teach, Suggest, or Disclose a Processor Operable to “Compare the Path Information Identifying the Virtual Circuit Assigned to the Particular Subscriber to the Particular Virtual Circuit Used to Receive the Communication from the Particular Subscriber”**

The Examiner apparently equates signaling processor 360 disclosed in *Gardner* with the processor recited in Claim 1. (Office Action, Page 3) However, the Examiner acknowledges, and Applicants agree, that *Gardner* fails to disclose a processor “operable to compare the path information of the particular subscriber to the particular virtual circuit used to receive the communication from the particular subscriber,” as recited in Claim 1. (Office Action, Page 3) The Examiner argues that *Nattkemper* discloses this limitation. Applicants respectfully disagree.

*Nattkemper* merely discloses a distributed telecommunications switching subsystem that receives and distributes data packets passed between a plurality of switching subsystems or channel banks and a data packet switch. (Abstract) Each channel bank has a stored list of addresses. (Abstract) When a channel bank receives a data packet, it compares the address of the data packet to its stored list of addresses and transmits the data packet to another channel bank if the address of the data packet does not correspond to any of the addresses in its stored list of addresses. (Abstract) The data packet is passed on until it reaches a channel bank with a matching address or else it is appropriately handled by a last channel bank in the chain. (Abstract) If the address of the data packet matches an address in its stored list of addresses,

the channel bank passes the data packet through a subscriber interface card to a customer premises equipment unit correspond to the address of the data packet. (Abstract)

According to *Nattkemper*, ATM cells include information such as virtual path (VP) and virtual circuit (VC) routing information, and information concerning their termination. Each switching unit analyzes and evaluates the information included with each ATM cell to perform the above-discussed comparison with its stored list of addresses. The Examiner has cited no portion of *Nattkemper* that teaches, suggests, or discloses path information that “identif[ies] a particular virtual circuit that is pre-assigned to the particular subscriber for communication with the access server,” as recited in Claim 1. In other words, the Examiner has cited no portion of *Nattkemper* that discloses that the VCs associated with the ATM cells received by the switching units are pre-assigned to particular subscribers from which the data packets are received.

Thus, while *Nattkemper* may disclose comparing addressing information of a received data packet to a stored list of addresses of a switching unit for purposes of determining if the switching unit should process the data packet, *Nattkemper* fails to teach, suggest, or disclose a processor “operable to compare *the path information of the particular subscriber to the particular virtual circuit used to receive the communication from the particular subscriber*,” as recited in Claim 1. The path information for the particular subscriber recited in Claim 1 identifies “a particular virtual circuit that is pre-assigned to the particular subscriber for communicating with the access server.” At a minimum, *Nattkemper* fails to teach, suggest, or disclose the path information recited in Claim 1 and, thus, necessarily fails to teach, suggest, or disclose a processor “operable to compare *the path information of the particular subscriber to the particular virtual circuit used to receive the communication from the particular subscriber*,” as recited in Claim 1.

**D. The Proposed *Gardner-Nattkemper* Combination Fails to Teach, Suggest, or Disclose a Processor Operable to “Identify the Particular Subscriber for Connection to the Second Communication Network Based on the Comparison”**

As noted above, the Examiner apparently equates signaling processor 360 disclosed in *Gardner* with the processor recited in Claim 1. (Office Action, Page 3) However, the Examiner acknowledges, and Applicants agree, that *Gardner* fails to disclose a processor operable to “identify the particular subscriber for connection to the second communication network based on the comparison,” as recited in Claim 1. The Examiner argues that *Nattkemper* discloses this limitation. Applicants respectfully disagree.

First, because *Nattkemper* fails to teach, suggest, or disclose the comparison recited in Claim 1, as discussed above, *Nattkemper* necessarily fails to teach, suggest, or disclose a processor operable to “identify the particular subscriber for connection to the second communication network *based on the comparison*,” as recited in Claim 1. Additionally, the portion of *Nattkemper* cited by the Examiner as disclosing this limitation (see Office Action, Page 3 citing Column 6, Lines 8-35) mentions nothing about “identify[ing] the particular subscriber,” let alone “identifying the particular subscriber for connection to the second communication network,” as recited in Claim 1. Thus, *Nattkemper* fails to teach, suggest, or disclose a processor operable to “identify the particular subscriber for connection to the second communication network based on the comparison,” as recited in Claim 1.

**E. The Proposed *Gardner-Nattkemper* Combination is Inadequate and Cannot Be Made**

The rejection of Applicants’ claims is also improper because the Examiner has not shown the required teaching, suggestion, or motivation in *Gardner*, *Nattkemper*, or in the knowledge generally available to those of ordinary skill in the art at the time of the invention to combine or modify *Gardner* or *Nattkemper* in the manner the Examiner proposes. The rejected claims are allowable for at least this reason.

Applicants respectfully submit that the Examiner’s conclusory assertion that it would have been obvious to combine the teachings of *Gardner* with the teachings of *Nattkemper* to arrive at Applicants’ invention is entirely insufficient to support a *prima facie* case of

obviousness under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) under the M.P.E.P. and the governing Federal Circuit case law.

The question raised under 35 U.S.C. § 103 is whether the prior art taken as a whole would suggest the claimed invention taken as a whole to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of the invention. Accordingly, even if all elements of a claim are disclosed in various prior art references, which is certainly not the case here as discussed above, the claimed invention taken as a whole cannot be said to be obvious without some reason given in the prior art why one of ordinary skill at the time of the invention would have been prompted to modify the teachings of a reference or combine the teachings of multiple references to arrive at the claimed invention. It is clear based at least on the many distinctions discussed above that the proposed *Gardner-Nattkemper* combination does not, taken as a whole, suggest the claimed invention, taken as a whole. Applicants respectfully submit that the Examiner has merely pieced together disjointed portions of unrelated references to reconstruct Applicants' claims.

The M.P.E.P. sets forth the strict legal standard for establishing a *prima facie* case of obviousness based on modification or combination of prior art references. “To establish a *prima facie* case of obviousness, three basic criteria must be met. First, there must be some suggestion or motivation, either in the references themselves or in the knowledge generally available to one of ordinary skill in the art, to modify the reference or combine reference teachings. Second, there must be a reasonable expectation of success. Finally, the prior art reference (or references where combined) must teach or suggest all the claim limitations.” M.P.E.P. § 2142, 2143. The teaching, suggestion, or motivation for the modification or combination and the reasonable expectation of success must both be found in the prior art and cannot be based on an applicant’s disclosure. *See Id.* (citations omitted). “Obviousness can only be established by combining or modifying the teachings of the prior art to produce the claimed invention where there is some teaching, suggestion, or motivation to do so found either explicitly or implicitly in the references themselves or in the knowledge generally available to one of ordinary skill in the art” at the time of the invention. M.P.E.P. § 2143.01. Even the fact that references *can* be modified or combined does not render the resultant modification or combination obvious unless the prior art teaches or suggests the desirability

of the modification or combination. *See Id.* (citations omitted). Moreover, “To establish *prima facie* obviousness of a claimed invention, all the claim limitations must be taught or suggested by the prior art. All words in a claim must be considered in judging the patentability of that claim against the prior art.” M.P.E.P. § 2143.03 (citations omitted).

The governing Federal Circuit case law makes this strict legal standard even more clear.<sup>2</sup> According to the Federal Circuit, “a showing of a suggestion, teaching, or motivation to combine or modify prior art references is an essential component of an obviousness holding.” *In re Sang-Su Lee*, 277 F.3d 1338, 1343, 61 U.S.P.Q.2d 1430, 1433 (Fed. Cir. 2002) (quoting *Brown & Williamson Tobacco Corp. v. Philip Morris Inc.*, 229 F.3d 1120, 1124-25, 56 U.S.P.Q.2d 1456, 1459 (Fed. Cir. 2000)). “Evidence of a suggestion, teaching, or motivation . . . may flow from the prior art references themselves, the knowledge of one of ordinary skill in the art, or, in some cases, the nature of the problem to be solved.” *In re Dembicza*k, 175 F.3d 994, 999, 50 U.S.P.Q.2d 1614, 1617 (Fed. Cir. 1999). However, the “range of sources available . . . does not diminish the requirement for actual evidence.” *Id.* Although a prior art device “may be capable of being modified to run the way the apparatus is claimed, there must be a suggestion or motivation in the reference to do so.” *In re Mills*, 916 F.2d at 682, 16 U.S.P.Q.2d at 1432. *See also In re Rouffet*, 149 F.3d 1350, 1357, 47 U.S.P.Q.2d 1453, 1457-58 (Fed. Cir. 1998) (holding a *prima facie* case of obviousness not made where the combination of the references taught every element of the claimed invention but did not provide a motivation to combine); *In Re Jones*, 958 F.2d 347, 351, 21 U.S.P.Q.2d 1941, 1944 (Fed. Cir. 1992) (“Conspicuously missing from this record is any evidence, other than the PTO’s speculation (if that can be called evidence) that one of ordinary skill in the herbicidal art would have been motivated to make the modification of the prior art salts necessary to arrive at” the claimed invention.). Even a determination that it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of the invention to try the proposed modification or combination is not sufficient to establish a *prima facie* case of obviousness. *See In re Fine*, 837 F.2d 1071, 1075, 5 U.S.P.Q.2d 1596, 1599 (Fed. Cir. 1988).

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<sup>2</sup> Note M.P.E.P. 2145 X.C. (“The Federal Circuit has produced a number of decisions overturning obviousness rejections due to a lack of suggestion in the prior art of the desirability of combining references.”).

In addition, the M.P.E.P. and the Federal Circuit repeatedly warn against using an applicant's disclosure as a blueprint to reconstruct the claimed invention. For example, the M.P.E.P. states, "The tendency to resort to 'hindsight' based upon applicant's disclosure is often difficult to avoid due to the very nature of the examination process. However, impermissible hindsight must be avoided and the legal conclusion must be reached on the basis of the facts gleaned from the prior art." M.P.E.P. § 2142. The governing Federal Circuit cases are equally clear. "A critical step in analyzing the patentability of claims pursuant to [35 U.S.C. § 103] is casting the mind back to the time of invention, to consider the thinking of one of ordinary skill in the art, guided only by the prior art references and the then-accepted wisdom in the field. . . . Close adherence to this methodology is especially important in cases where the very ease with which the invention can be understood may prompt one 'to fall victim to the insidious effect of a hindsight syndrome wherein that which only the invention taught is used against its teacher.'" *In re Kotzab*, 217 F.3d 1365, 1369, 55 U.S.P.Q.2d 1313, 1316 (Fed. Cir. 2000) (citations omitted). In *In re Kotzab*, the court noted that to prevent the use of hindsight based on the invention to defeat patentability of the invention, this court requires the examiner to show a motivation to combine the references that create the case of obviousness. *See id.* *See also*, e.g., *Grain Processing Corp. v. American Maize-Products*, 840 F.2d 902, 907, 5 U.S.P.Q.2d 1788, 1792 (Fed. Cir. 1988). Similarly, in *In re Dembiczak*, the Federal Circuit reversed a finding of obviousness by the Board, explaining that the required evidence of such a teaching, suggestion, or motivation is essential to avoid impermissible hindsight reconstruction of an applicant's invention:

Our case law makes clear that the best defense against the subtle but powerful attraction of hind-sight obviousness analysis is *rigorous application of the requirement for a showing of the teaching or motivation to combine prior art references*. Combining prior art references without evidence of such a suggestion, teaching, or motivation simply takes the inventor's disclosure as a blueprint for piecing together the prior art to defeat patentability—the essence of hindsight.

175 F.3d at 999, 50 U.S.P.Q.2d at 1617 (emphasis added) (citations omitted).

With regard to the proposed *Gardner-Nattkemper* combination, the Examiner indicates that "[i]t would have been obvious to a person of skill in the art at the time the invention was made to combine the teachings of Gardner and Nattkemper because

Nattkemper's teaching would allow one to determine the connection path so that communication can be established in a proper manner." (Office Action, Page 3). First, even assuming this were true and that this motivation was actually present in the references, it would have no bearing on Applicants' claims. The Examiner has done nothing more than propose an alleged advantage (and one which Applicants do not admit could even be achieved by combining these references in the manner the Examiner proposes) of combining *Gardner* with *Nattkemper*. The Examiner has not pointed to any portions of either *Gardner* or *Nattkemper* that would teach, suggest, or motivate one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of invention to incorporate the broadband telecommunications system interface disclosed in *Gardner* with the distributed telecommunications switching system and method disclosed in *Nattkemper*. It certainly would not have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of the invention, based solely on the prior art, *to even attempt* to incorporate into the broadband system interface disclosed in *Gardner* such a distributed telecommunications switching system as the one disclosed in *Nattkemper*. Even more clearly, it certainly would not have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of the invention, based solely on the prior art, *to actually* incorporate into the broadband system interface disclosed in *Gardner* such a distributed telecommunications switching system, which would be required to establish a *prima facie* case of obviousness under the M.P.E.P. and the governing Federal Circuit case law.

Accordingly, since the prior art fails to provide the required teaching, suggestion, or motivation to combine *Gardner* with *Nattkemper* in the manner the Examiner proposes, Applicants respectfully submit that the Examiner's conclusions set forth in the Office Action fall well short of the requirements set forth in the M.P.E.P. and the governing Federal Circuit case law for demonstrating a *prima facie* case of obviousness. Thus, Applicants respectfully submit that the Examiner's proposed combination of *Gardner* with *Nattkemper* appears to be merely an attempt, with the benefit of hindsight, to reconstruct Applicants' claims and is unsupported by the teachings of *Gardner* and *Nattkemper*. Applicants respectfully submit that the rejection must therefore be withdrawn.

Second, as demonstrated above, Applicants respectfully submit that *Gardner* is wholly inadequate as a reference against independent Claim 1. Thus, even if *Nattkemper*

discloses the portions of Claim 1 that the Examiner suggests (with which Applicants do not agree), and even assuming for the sake of argument that there was the required teaching, suggestion, or motivation to combine *Gardner* with *Nattkemper* as the Examiner proposes, the proposed *Gardner-Nattkemper* combination would still fail to disclose, teach, or suggest the limitations specifically recited in independent Claim 1, as is required under the M.P.E.P. and the governing Federal Circuit cases for a *prima facie* case of obviousness.

For at least these reasons, Applicants respectfully request reconsideration and allowance of Claim 1 and its dependent claims. For at least the reasons stated with regard to independent Claim 1, Applicants respectfully request reconsideration and allowance of independent Claims 11, 18, 26, 32, 36, and 40, together with all of their respective dependent claims.

Claims 2-5 and 7-10 (which depend from Claim 1), Claims 12-17 (which depend from Claim 11), Claims 19-21 and 24-25 (which depend from Claim 18), Claims 27-31 (which depend from Claim 26), Claim 33 (which depends from Claim 32), Claim 37 (which depends from Claim 36), and Claims 41-46 (which depend from Claim 40) depend from allowable independent claims and are allowable for at least this reason. In addition, Claims 2-5, 7-10, 12-17, 19-21, 24-25, 27-31, 33, 37, and 41-46 recite further patentable distinctions over the prior art of record. To avoid burdening the record and in view of the clear allowability of Claims 1, 11, 18, 26, 32, 36, and 40, as described above, Applicants do not specifically discuss these distinctions in this Response. However, Applicants reserve the right to discuss these distinctions in a future Response or on Appeal. For at least these reasons, Applicants respectfully request reconsideration and allowance of Claims 2-5, 7-10, 12-17, 19-21, 24-25, 27-31, 33, 37, and 41-46.

**II. Dependent Claims 6-7, 22-23, 34-35, and 38-39 are Allowable over the Proposed *Gardner-Nattkemper-Ball* Combination**

The Examiner rejects Claims 6-7, 22-23, 34-35, and 38-39 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over *Gardner* in view of *Nattkemper*, and further in view of U.S. Patent 6,446,200 to Ball (“*Ball*”). Claims 6-7, 22-23, 34-35, and 38-39 depend from independent Claims 1, 18, 32, and 36, respectively, which Applicants have shown above to be clearly

allowable. Applicants respectfully submit that *Ball* fails to make up for any of the deficiencies of *Gardner* and *Nattkemper* discussed above. Thus, Claims 6-7, 22-23, 34-35, and 38-39 are allowable at least because of their dependence on Claims 1, 18, 32, and 36, respectively. In addition, Claims 6-7, 22-23, 34-35, and 38-39 recite further patentable distinctions over the prior art of record. To avoid burdening the record and in view of the clear allowability of Claims 1, 18, 32, and 36, Applicants do not specifically discuss these distinctions in this Response. However, Applicants reserve the right to discuss these distinctions in a future Response or on Appeal, if appropriate. Furthermore, Applicants do not admit that the proposed combination of *Gardner*, *Nattkemper*, and *Ball* is possible or that the Examiner has demonstrated the required teaching, suggestion, or motivation to combine these references. For at least these reasons, Applicants respectfully request reconsideration and allowance of Claims 6-7, 22-23, 34-35, and 38-39.

### **III. No Waiver**

All of Applicants' arguments and amendments are without prejudice or disclaimer. Additionally, Applicants have merely discussed example distinctions from the *Gardner*, *Nattkemper*, and *Ball* references. Other distinctions may exist, and Applicants reserve the right to discuss these additional distinctions in a later Response or on Appeal, if appropriate. By not responding to additional statements made by the Examiner, Applicants do not acquiesce to the Examiner's additional statements. The example distinctions discussed by Applicants are sufficient to overcome the obviousness rejections.

**Conclusion**

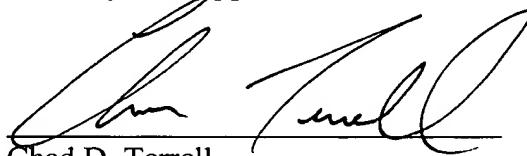
Applicants have made an earnest attempt to place this case in condition for allowance. For the foregoing reasons, and for other reasons clearly apparent, Applicants respectfully request full allowance of all pending claims.

If the Examiner feels that a telephone conference would advance prosecution of this Application in any manner, the Examiner is invited to contact Samir A. Bhavsar, Attorney for Applicants, at the Examiner's convenience at (214) 953-6581.

Although Applicants believe no fees are due, the Commissioner is hereby authorized to charge any fees or credit any overpayments to Deposit Account No. 02-0384 of Baker Botts L.L.P.

Respectfully submitted,

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